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PRE-RAPHAELITISM AND ITS LESSONS.

IN a reply to a correspondent a couple of weeks since, we gave at some length our ideas of the movement in Art known as Pre-Raphaelitism, but, necessarily, not entering so fully into the philosophy of the thing as we should have done with more leisure. There are some trains of thought connected with the subject which we will now endeavor to follow out, and make of more practical use to our artists and amateurs.

We stated Pre-Raphaelitism to be a preliminary state of Art-study. We do not imagine that one of its advocates ever considered that he had attained the *end* of Art in embracing what is known by that title, and the rapid progress of the school towards higher beauty and fuller power, proves that they were not content to remain in it. It is most essentially an educational or preparatory state, and as such, notable for two qualities which we intend now to consider, with reference to the results of this education.

The first is—conscientiousness—the rigid adherence to that which the artist sees in Nature and considers worthy of imitation by Art—a contempt of the smooth-glozed falsehoods of popular Art, and all those points which weak artists resort to to catch the applause of the weak and thoughtless—glitter of apparel, and show of sanctity or emotion. The P. R. B., as they were popularly called, painted what they had before them as truly as their faculties would admit, adhering in all cases to portraiture of their models, believing that Nature's imperfections even, were better than *their* perfections. No specious allurements of a superficial beauty or false ideality could take them from this—truth, and, if truth and beauty are inconsistent, truth only, was the sentiment in which they labored, and for which they defied the authority of fashion and the criticisms of the thoughtless. With faces turning neither for calls at the right or left (rather *from* the calls, if turning at all) they pushed on, with an energy indomitable by labor or neglect, to what they believed to be the supreme good of Art, perhaps not knowing fully what that was, but full of faith that it was to be found in the pursuit of truth alone.

The second is—intensity. Pre-Raphael-

itism, indeed, seems to us like an awakening of Art from a long sleep, when, for the first time recognizing the features of his loved Nature, his embrace is so ardent that no fold of her garment, no hair of her head, no grain of dust on her feet even, could escape his loving regard, but reverencing, adoring everything pertaining to her, he worships in supreme devotion and self-forgetfulness. It is that love which "clasps everything it embraces so hard that it crushes it if it be hollow," that characterizes Pre-Raphaelitism, and as all but truth is hollow, so all but truth was crushed. The intensity of the new school is indeed a thing to be considered, how in all her details, even to the painting of single hairs, and the individualizing of leaves on a forest tree, they followed Nature, and this not with the careless hands and idle hearts of many of their contemporaries, but with an earnestness that made their hands tremble and seem weak, and made power itself timid.

These were the qualities which divided the Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood from all other modern schools of Art, and linked them to the glorious elder brethren, who wrought in the love and fear of God—as they in the love and reverence of Nature. It was a bold experiment on a grand scale, and let us see, for our own profit, how it has resulted.

There are two ways in which we may examine it—in fact, two kinds of success to be reached by it—success in attaining true excellence; and in commanding the respect of the world. We were in England in the year when Millais' Christ in the Carpenter's Shop, was exhibited—a picture which displayed all of the imperfections of the preparatory state, in a remarkable degree. The picture was awkward in composition, ugly in expression, and heavy in color—but conscientious and intense to such a degree, that it commanded the respect of the hanging committee, who placed it on the first tier above the line—a very favorable position for a young artist who had made his *début*, we believe, the year before. It was not at all prepossessing—but, we recollect remarking to an artist friend at the time, that if Art ever became great in England, it would be through those men upon whom, then, the

ridicule of nearly all England was poured. That was five years ago; and, only two years after, we found the pictures of Millais' on the line, and attracting more real admiration than any others in the exhibition; and, now, Mr. Millais is one of the most prominent candidates for the vacant academicianship. This was no slight triumph for a young man of twenty-six or seven; but, it is true that the leading Pre-Raphaelites are ranked among the best artists of England, and the school has nearly revolutionized Art in that country. So much for outside success. Millais' color, instead of the heavy, opaque qualities it had in the first picture we saw of his, has become so pure, that he is ranked as the second colorist to Turner, and his *confrères* are but little behind him; and we have, indeed, never seen flesh color—the great test of the colorist—so clear and pure as in Millais' pictures. The rendering of character, particularly in the female faces, is as refined and subtle, and expressive of masterly drawing, as with many artists who have labored, with equal natural power, a year for Millais' month. And, even yet, the school is no more than educational. This is much for young men to do, and it teaches a lesson worth ten times all the lessons you can get in all the academies of Europe, viz. that conscientiousness and intensity are the noblest masters in Art. Will our school study this lesson of Pre-Raphaelitism?

But, since it is in its rendering of detail that the school has most received attention, it is worth while to consider further the objections commonly urged against the minuteness of which we have spoken. It is true that the rendering of detail is not the object of Art—for, when you have learned all the objects in Nature, and can repeat them with entire correctness and ease, you have still only acquired the means of expressing ideas—you have not attained Art or the Ideal—not even to the full meaning of the actual, because, under all this surface detail, there is laid a greater truth—the harmony of all things with each other. But, how will you express the greater truth before unrolling the case which contains it? How will you express ideas, before you have obtained the language? And, how further can you

feel the grandeur and beauty of the great, where you have not measured fully the little? Detail is not the end of Art, but it is the means of it—as indispensable to it, as the knowledge of our letters to learning to write?

THE WILDERNESS AND ITS WATERS.*

CHAP. V.

THE RIVER.

THE first feeling of disappointment over, the river grew more impressive. The blackness of its waters, and its perfect quiet—not a ripple of any kind being on the surface, and only the slightest perceptible current—together with its darkly clad banks, and the immense gaunt pines raising themselves silently at either hand, produced a melancholy tone of feeling, greatly increased by the absence of any mark of civilization. Everything was as wild as when the first Jesuit missionaries, in their bark canoes, explored these regions, if indeed they ever reached here. The river seemed only a cleft in the massive forest, and on each side a veil of maple, birch, iron-wood, mingled with balsams and the lesser firs, came down to the water's edge; and over them pines, often a hundred and fifty feet in height, shot up singly, their sombre green relieved darkly against the blue sky, or with dead top limbs angularly laced, and bleakly surmounting their yet living bases. We felt the sentiment of the wilderness now more fully than we had before, even when on the lonely lake, with forest-clothed hills rolling away on every side. The water, as we looked down into it, seemed Lethæan, and I recalled the lines of Lowell—

When he might
Down some great river drift beyond men's sight
To where the undethroned forest's royal tent
Broods with its hush o'er half a continent.

Silently we re-launched the boats and turned down the river, the guides again taking the oars. A few miles down, we came to a break in the green wall which shut our vision in—a strip of marshy, natural meadow several hundred feet wide, through the middle of which ran a stream like that by which we had entered. Standing up in the boat, we could see that the opening expanded as it receded from the river, and a broad, quiet lake, perhaps a mile and a half across, was stretched out before us, fringed by a wide strip of bulrushes and marsh grass, around which closed the monotonous forest. Bill caught sight of a deer, with head and neck just raised above the grass and rushes, and almost as quick as thought caught up his rifle and fired, but the deer was still quicker, and we in the other boat caught a sight of the white tail raised in the air as he made two or three bounds and disappeared.

It is wearisome even to tell of the miles of this grim, unchangeable forest which we passed through. It grew almost painful to look upon the unvarying wall, which, stretch as far away as it might, still limited our vision, and we felt that there was indeed a wilderness world over which the forest held an inexorable sway. An occasional birch, yellow in the first autumn changes, or a delicately-leaved mountain-ash relieved slightly the monotone of green, but the monotony of foliage nothing relieved. There

* Entered according to Act of Congress.

were no bold crags or wild passages, no clefts through the living rock which should give a picturesque variety—nothing but the deep, dark river winding through sombre forests, into which the eye could not pierce a boat's length.

It was with pleasure, therefore, that we heard the guides say that we should soon reach the falls. We heard their murmur afar off, and soon saw the huge black boulders that stood above the water at their head. Arresting the boats at one of these, the guides made such changes in the disposition of the cargo as would enable them safely to "run" the rapids. The guns were laid in the bottom of the boat, and we, the passengers, instructed to keep as low as was convenient, and the guides, taking in the oars, seated themselves in the stern with the paddles, and we pushed into the current, which bore us with accelerating velocity towards the chute. Looking down we could see a long passage of foaming water rushing with fearful velocity between black points of rock, making only a narrow channel through which to pass. We had no time to think, for as the boat entered the head of the first plunge it started forward, and instantly the black rocks were rushing past us indistinguishably. In the mid fall the bottom of the boat touched a point of rock, which, with a startling rudeness, rasped its whole length, and before we could recover from the trepidation which the probability of such a wreck had caused, we had passed the rapid and were tossing on the deep water below. Looking now for Angler, who had preceded us, we found him at the edge of one of the channels, Bill keeping the boat fast to one of the rocks at the foot of the rapid, and with a trout already hooked. The game was small here, however, none of the fish weighing over a pound; and after a short time Student and I raised a protest against catching any more, when we had already thirty or forty large fish, the most of which we must throw away.

Below the falls the country gradually changed in its character. The land became lower, and the banks of the river were for the most part fringed with alders and other low bushes, and the water maples were the only trees which grew on the flat land, which, being free from all underbrush, and covered with heavy wild grass, and the maples resembling very strongly in shape and color of leafage, old apple trees, produced the appearance of a neglected orchard. The illusion was indeed complete, and when at length we came to a little log cabin, with a clearing of a few acres on the higher land, a little back from the river, it was hard to persuade ourselves that it would be useless to land and look for some apples under the trees. We concluded to pay the cabin a visit, and as we heard the tinkle of a cow-bell, we hoped to get some milk. The cries of a pack of hounds greeted us as we landed where a stake driven in the bank, and a path worn to the water's edge, told us we might do so with ease, but disregarding the yelping and display of canine courage, we walked up *en masse* to the cabin. The immediate surroundings were most unprepossessing, but the master of the house met us at the door with a half-drunken look of mingled welcome and repelling. Moodie said he was always drunk, and the haggard look of the wife,

whose intense black eyes sunk back into their wasted sockets, as if to throw their fires further and more keenly, and whose face turned towards us with more defiance than anything else, indicated even more. She had still some womanly feeling, and did not care to be seen in this degradation, so, sullenly and without a word to any of us, went on with her work. Two dwarfish children, dirty and brown, and ragged, played without gaiety at the door, and shrunk back to their mother as we entered. The cabin was a single room, about fifteen feet square, roughly furnished, and we sat down on some wooden benches for a moment before saying anything beyond the usual salutations. I endeavored to enter into conversation with the woman, but could succeed no further than to get answers to direct questions.

They had lived there six years, the husband lumbering in the winter, raising a scanty crop of potatoes in the summer, and getting drunk as long as his winter's earnings, or an occasional sale of deer skins, or otter and mink pelts, would enable him to purchase liquor at the settlements. Sick of the spectacle, we bought of the woman a couple of quarts of milk, and went on our way. This we found resembled too much the lives of most of the settlers here. Without the stimulus of social influences, without any room for higher ambition, and craving excitement to break the monotony of life, every mental and spiritual quality dies out, and they descend to the level of their dog-companions. Our ideal of the true independent hunter and backwoodsman, free, open, and noble-hearted, yielding to all the purer instincts quickened by constant contact with Nature, we found not.

We resumed our journey, and as the afternoon had nearly passed away, we looked for a convenient place to camp. We found a spot of ground higher than the surrounding land, and quite dry and over-arched by trees, with a sloping bank upon which we might draw the boats. Here we landed, and the guides set at once about building a camp of hemlock and spruce boughs. I determined to try what could be done in the way of getting up a dinner in the woods, and commenced examining our resources. We had bread, salt pork, cranberries, potatoes, and the partridge Student had killed the day before, with trout in any quantity, and sugar, pepper and salt.

The first thing was to get the potatoes on the fire. This Moodie attended to, and in the meanwhile I dressed the partridge, while Student performed the same operation with the fish. All the fragments of bread were soaked in one of the tin-pans, and I chopped a piece of fat pork very fine by the aid of the bowie knife, when bread and pork were mixed thoroughly together, with pepper and salt, and the large trout being split open through the back, as my mother had taught me once to split shad for baking, was filled with this "dressing;" then being wrapped in a number of thicknesses of brown paper, was ready for the fire. I then cleared the coals away from the side of the blazing pile next the camp, and digging a trench in the hot ground large enough to lay the fish in, and six inches deep, I drew into it a bed of hot ashes and embers to the depth of about two inches, and on this laid the trout, enveloped